

SPEECH  
OF  
HON. ROGER A. PRYOR,  
OF VIRGINIA,

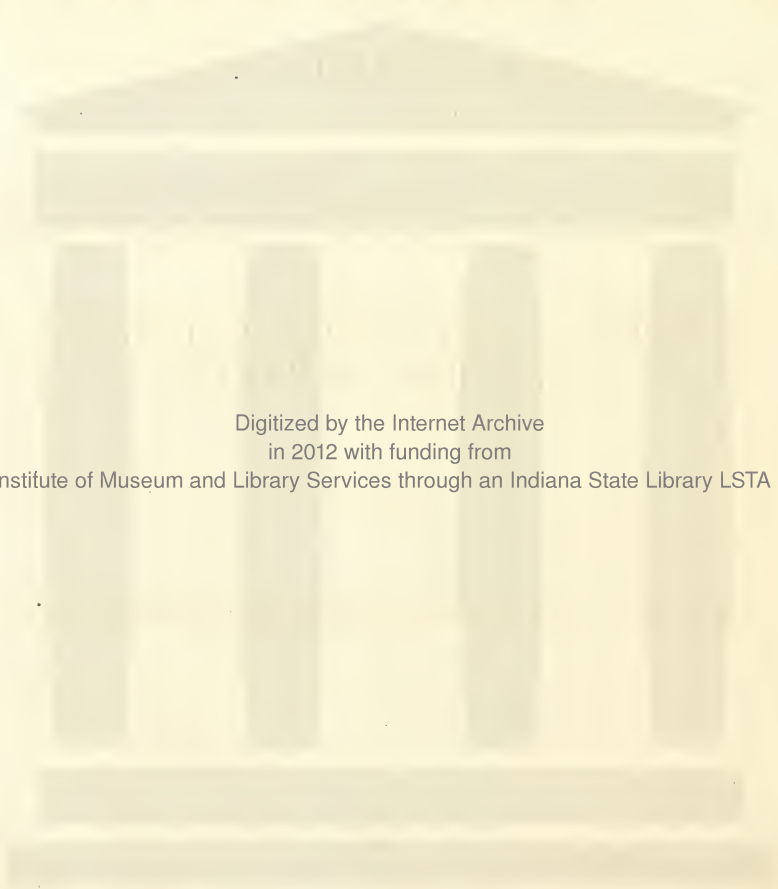
ON THE  
PRINCIPLES AND POLICY OF THE BLACK  
REPUBLICAN PARTY;

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, DECEMBER 29, 1859.

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## SPEECH

Mr. PRYOR said:

Mr. CLERK: The member from Pennsylvania [Mr. GROW] charges the Democracy with the responsibility of the non-organization of Congress. In so far as the charge imputes blame, it is unwarrantable; in so far as it implies praise, it is perfectly true. If the gentleman means to assert that the Democracy are responsible for the non-organization of the House on constitutional principles, and in the interest of the constitutional party, he affirms what the record distinctly contradicts; for to that end we have exerted our best abilities—unsuccessfully, however, for want of sufficient strength. If the gentleman intends to assert that the Democracy are responsible for the non-organization of the House, by the election of a sectional Speaker, and the ascendancy of a sectional party, we readily and cordially admit the truth of the declaration. Nay, we boast the fact, and claim a monopoly in the glory of the achievement. Let it go to the country, then, on the deliberate asseveration of a Black Republican Representative, that the Democracy have so far prevented the success of the anti-slavery party, in a capital object of their nefarious enterprise. Let it go to the country, that, sooner than expose the Republic to the shame and calamity of installing a Black Republican Representative in a chief office of the Government, we, the Democracy, albeit of small consequence on the score of numbers, did yet oppose an immovable barrier in the path of his promotion; and that, at last, when, despite our most obstinate resistance, the wrong was consummated, if it shall be consummated, we emerged from the struggle with honor untarnished and courage unsubdued. This be our praise; and the

intended reproach of the member from Pennsylvania the country will distinguish as our highest title to applause. So believing, I beg to assure the honorable member that we are resolved to persist in our course; and that when his nominee assumes that chair, he will take it against the unanimous protest of the Democracy of this House. No clamor of destitute contractors, in peril of protest, will avail to shake us in the strength of our purpose; for, greater than any individual wrong, greater than any private calamity, do we regard the wrong and the calamity of aiding Black Republicanism a single step in the consummation of its mischievous schemes.

In support of the general imputation of blame on the Democracy for the non-organization of Congress, the member from Pennsylvania brings forward the particular statement that we are responsible for the introduction of the slavery issue in this controversy. The untruth of the allegation is manifest through the veil of sophistical reasoning employed to conceal it. In the sense that he raises a wanton and indecent clamor who cries fire when he detects the torch of the incendiary; in the sense that he is guilty of a breach of the peace who repels the assault of a robber—in that sense, and in that sense only, are we responsible for the agitation of the slavery issue in this debate. The nomination of SHERMAN for the Speakership was, in itself, a proclamation of war, and gave the signal of hostilities. In presenting a man, who, besides his general concurrence in the schemes of the anti-slavery party, is obnoxious to the special objection of complicity in a most mischievous and treasonable publication; a man who has indorsed a proposition to treat the

NOTE. In arraiging the *North*, the speaker intends only the dominant, anti-slavery party of the *North*.

slaveholders as *Pariahs*, and to deny them the courtesies of social intercourse, and the amenities of human fellowship—the nomination of such a man, I say, to preside over the deliberations of this House, and to determine its legislation, was the provocative cause of the discussion which the member and his associates now pretend to deplore. They apply the spark, and then affect astonishment at the explosion. It is a way they have, not to recognize the relation between cause and effect, and, while busy in putting agencies into operation, to disclaim responsibility for the logical result. So after sowing the country broadcast with their dragons'-teeth publications of violence and sedition, they are amazed at the irruption of armed men into Harper's Ferry. The country will as readily determine who are responsible for the introduction of the slavery issue in this controversy as who are responsible for the obstruction to the organization of the House. If you do not desire the agitation of the slavery question, why did you nominate a man whose mere candidacy is an affront to southern feeling and a challenge to southern resistance? If you did not intend to oppose an impediment to the organization of Congress, why attempt to saddle us with a Speaker, whose election we are bound in honor to oppose by all expedients, and to the last extremity?

But the member from Pennsylvania is disgusted with the clamor over the *Helper* publication. Very likely. What

"Thief e'er felt the halter draw,  
With good opinion of the law?"

Detected in a clandestine scheme of attack on the sanctity of the Constitution and the peace of the Republic, the member very naturally seeks to shrink from the shame of exposure, and to hush the voice of popular indignation. It is a vain attempt. I can assure him he has not heard the last of his connection with the *Helper* conspiracy. We intend to blazon it until the public are familiar with the infamy. We intend to repeat the story until the country resounds with denunciation of the treason.

Above all, the member from Pennsylvania is indignant at the introduction of the slavery agitation into this Hall. And this profession comes from a party whose only impulse is an instinct of sectional animosity; whose only object is the abolition of slavery; whose only employment is the exasperation of incendiary issues. This, from a Representative who owes his own importance less to superior intellect and energy of character than to a truculent hatred of the South, its people, and its institutions; this is the party and this

the person who deprecate the renewal of the slavery agitation. But, there is no blush on the brazen front of hypocrisy.

Mr. Clerk, the declarations of the member from Pennsylvania are of a piece with the uniform policy of his party, and with the conduct of its representatives since the commencement of this struggle. Sir, it is not the policy of the anti-slavery party to provoke the South beyond endurance. Their strategy consists of tentative approaches and gradual exhaustion. They do not intend to flush the game too soon—to overrun the prey—to hazard the success of their enterprise through the indiscreet impetuosity of its advocates. Consistent only in the inexorable pursuit of their object, they are unscrupulous in the employment of means, and pliable under the pressure of circumstances. At times, haughty in their port and direct in their attacks, they are again humble in their accents and oblique in their operations. It is an especially noteworthy circumstance, that whenever the South betrays symptoms of resentment under aggression, and a perception of their purpose, this anti-slavery party have recourse to moderate counsels and protestations of innocent intention. Recent acts of encroachment and insult having enraged the South to the point of armed resistance, the Black Republican party are quick to renounce their violent policy, and to affect the most pacific purposes. Witness their call for a national convention—an epitome of patriotism, a compendium of conservative principles! So they assume

"The livery of heaven to serve the devil!"

I say, moreover, Mr. Clerk, that the horror of slavery agitation, affected by the honorable member from Pennsylvania, is in keeping with the conduct of his associates of the Black Republican party since the beginning of this controversy. To my mind, that conduct has not been sufficiently remarked upon and signalized to the country.

Sir, we are all familiar with the principles of the Black Republican party. That it proposes the eventual extinction of slavery; that its immediate object is to usurp possession of the Federal Government, with the view of employing its power and patronage for the restriction and disparagement of slavery; that it disputes the validity of the fugitive slave law, nullifies its effect, and agitates for its repeal—that these are the principles and purposes of the Black Republican party, we had thought was a fact of historical record and universal notoriety. Nevertheless, what do we see here? Under the pressure of pertinent and persistent inquiry, and in pursuance of the policy I have already distinguished, the Representatives of the Black Republican party on this floor, have not hesitated to



affect an air of fidelity to the Constitution and conservative regard for the Union. They have an object to accomplish in the election of Speaker, with a view to the eventual realization of their ultimate aim. But success is difficult and doubtful in the present temper of the popular mind. They have been pushing their encroachments with too great ardor of aggression. At last, the South feels the sting of attack and insult in her bosom; her indignation is aroused, and her energies collecting for immediate and effectual resistance. The flagrancy of recent outrage, moreover, has shocked the sensibilities of no inconsiderable proportion of the northern people, and there is danger lest these gentlemen will be dragged from their places by the recoil of public sentiment among their own constituents. The exigencies of the occasion demand a new phase in the Protean policy of the Black Republican party; and a signal change we witness. The Representatives of that party here, renounce all their principles, repudiate all their pledges, disclaim all their objects, disavow all their connections, and appear on the stage of public affairs in a decent disguise of respectable patriotism. Nay, they even deny responsibility for their own sign-manual, and profess to repudiate principles in the propagation of which they were conspicuously active and energetic. If their recantations were sincere we would congratulate them on their conversion. But who gives them credit for candor? Their motive is as transparent as their conduct is detestable. The mailed hand is gloved for the moment, and we feel the pressure of a fraternal salutation. The beast sheathes his claws, and we are fondled with an affectionate and innocuous caress. So when Satan contrived the depravation and destruction of mankind, he put off the panoply of his infernal state, and assumed the mean and lowly shape of the meanest and lowest reptile. So when John Brown was plotting murder and treason at Harper's Ferry, he appeared in the innocent guise of scientific research:

"When the devil was sick, the devil a saint would be;  
When the devil got well, the devil a saint was he."

The victory won, and these Black Republican Representatives—they have given us assurance of the fact through the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STANTON] and the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. GROW]—will reassume their haughty airs, reaffirm their discarded pledges, and renew the work of encroachment and agitation. I tell the gentlemen we on this side of the House, and our constituents at home, understand the game in which they are engaged. I tell them we appreciate, for what they are worth, all their Pecksnifian proprieties and Joseph Surface sentimentalities.

We perfectly comprehend how it is and why it is they put forward the gentleman from Ohio to represent them as innocent in intention and inoffensive in action; how it is and why it is that—as he imputes to them conservative sentiments, denying even that they would invalidate the fugitive slave law, or molest the South in any of its rights—the Black Republican Representatives sit by in silent acquiescence; albeit, among them is the member from New Hampshire, [Mr. TAPPAN,] who justifies the assassination of officers engaged in the recovery of fugitives from labor; and the member from Indiana, [Mr. KILGORE,] who maintains that a native negro is worthier the rights of citizenship than a white man of foreign birth; and the member from Massachusetts, [Mr. BURLINGAME,] who is so radical, revolutionary, and rhapsodical as to clamor for an "anti-slavery Constitution, an anti-slavery Bible, and an anti-slavery God."

Mr. KILGORE. Will the gentleman yield to me for a moment?

Mr. PRYOR. I may as well define my position here, in respect of interruption.

Mr. KILGORE. Does the gentleman refer to me as the gentleman from Indiana?

Mr. PRYOR. I did, indeed.

Mr. KILGORE. Then the gentleman is entirely mistaken. He is no doubt misled by a garbled extract from a speech of mine in the constitutional convention. I know the gentleman would not intentionally misrepresent me.

Mr. PRYOR. Certainly not.

Mr. KILGORE. By reference to the correct report of that speech the gentleman will see that he does me great injustice in making that statement.

Mr. PRYOR. I am glad to hear the recantation, or rather the explanation of the honorable member from Indiana. I, of course, must be mistaken. The gentleman knows what he said, although I discover that I do not always remember what I have written in my day and generation. But the fact is, that a well-informed gentleman, conversant with the honorable gentleman's past career, did bring me a book which showed that the gentleman from Indiana did propound the very doctrine which I have designated. However, the gentleman now stands corrected. Then he does not think that the native negro is worthy of the rights of citizenship?

Mr. KILGORE. In that very speech to which the gentleman refers, I said that I wished it to be distinctly understood that I was not in favor of extending the right of suffrage to the negroes; but that I would extend it to every foreigner who

was here the required length of time. Permit me to say to the gentleman that a proposition was submitted to that convention, to extend, by constitutional provision, the right of suffrage to the negroes. That proposition was voted for by but a single man, and he a Democrat.

Mr. PRYOR. I am glad to hear it. That, however, does not affect the line of my argument at all; and I repeat, that I desire Representatives on the other side of the House to be persuaded that we here, and our constituents at home, perfectly understand their policy and ultimate purposes.

Mr. ENGLISH. I am unwilling that the remark made by my honorable colleague should go out without some correction. The gentleman to whom he refers as being a Democrat was not, according to my estimation, a Democrat, but has always been recognized in Indiana as an Abolitionist.

Mr. KILGORE. I ask my colleague if that gentleman was not elected as a Democrat?

Mr. ENGLISH. That is not my recollection.

Mr. KILGORE. That is mine, distinctly.

Mr. ENGLISH. He has always been an Abolitionist, and he belongs to the Republican party. [Cries of "Name!"] His name is May.

Mr. KILGORE. I am informed by my colleague [Mr. COLFAX] that that gentleman was the regular nominee of a Democratic convention.

Mr. COLFAX. He told me so himself.

Mr. NIBLACK. I ask whether that gentleman has ever been heard of in politics since?

Mr. KILGORE. That makes no difference.

Mr. NIBLACK. Never, sir.

Mr. PRYOR. These interruptions on immaterial points are rather embarrassing; so I will go on. Let me repeat, however, with emphasis, to the Representatives on the other side, that we of the South understand the developments here. We understand their policy. All this is obvious enough. It is the artifice of ambition, working with the resources of hypocrisy. I repeat to the representatives of the anti-slavery party on this floor, that the people of the South will not be deceived by this sham demonstration, nor be disarmed at the suggestion of a treacherous friendship. They are resolved to be *prepared* henceforth and forever.

But, Mr. Clerk, despite the studied silence and artful concealment of the Black Republican Representatives, we have an occasional revelation of their suppressed feeling and hidden purpose. After all their elaborate artifice of disguise, now and then we get a distinct glimpse of the "cloven foot." It is impossible, by any stringency of party drill,

to impose a padlock on the mouth of some among their numbers.

And here, permit me to make my acknowledgments to the honorable member from Pennsylvania, [Mr. HICKMAN,] for the speech which he delivered several days ago. Its doctrines I abominate; but its candor I must applaud. By contrast with the truckling and shuffling, the timidity and time-serving, the prevarication and dissimulation which have characterized the conduct of the Black Republican Representatives, the outspoken candor of the gentleman from Pennsylvania is indeed an admirable exhibition. It is a refreshing spectacle; it restores one's confidence in the *virtue* of mankind—I use the word in its original sense—to hear a man who has the pluck and the purpose to open his mouth and speak the thoughts of his mind. Further I cannot go in compliment of the honorable member's speech—I waive all consideration of its conceded ability—for a speech of more vindictive spirit and untenable doctrine, was never delivered in the American Congress.

Sir, the honorable member has accomplished the work from which the great abilities of Edmund Burke recoiled in impotent endeavor. He has drawn up an indictment against a "whole people;" an indictment, too, bristling at every point with counts and criminalities. He has exhibited articles of impeachment against the entire South. He has arraigned the South upon the most heinous accusation. He charged us explicitly and solemnly, on his responsibility as a Representative, with the *violation of all compacts, compromises, and covenants*. He stigmatizes us as a perfidious race, as a people of Punic faith, as a community without the fidelity to engagements which constitutes the tie of all social confederacy. Nay, to impart sting and poignancy to the accusation, he coupled it with the aggravating imputation of ingratitude. Yes, sir, he asserted distinctly that all these covenants, which we are charged with breaking, were made for our benefit; not perceiving the limp in his logic, the contradiction in the statement, that we had violated engagements which operate to our advantage. Perhaps, sir, he intended to imply that the people of the South are fools as well as knaves; otherwise, I cannot see how he expects credit for the assertion that they themselves have loosened the bond of covenants which were all for their own benefit. Nor is that all. There is this additional and incomprehensible absurdity in the gentleman's argument: he represents the North as complaining of the infraction of engagements which operated to its disadvantage and disparagement. It will puzzle the gentleman's ingenuity to explain why the South should be faithless to



favorable compacts, and why the North should urge as a grievance that they are relieved from onerous restrictions. This is one of the dilemmas into which malignity is so apt to betray its victims.

But, sir, I contest the gentleman's argument in both of its propositions. I deny that all the compacts and compromises of the Constitution are for the benefit of the South; and I deny that she is guilty of any, the least, violation of her covenants.

In the first place, it is not true that the South realized any enlargement of right by the so-called compromises of the Constitution. It is not true generally, for the reason that when the States of the South assented to the Constitution and entered the Confederacy, they were independent nationalities, and as such were invested with all the rights of sovereignty. Their power was complete, and any modification of that power operated as a restriction and derogation. The only acquisition of right and power which they could have gained, arose out of the relations which they contracted with other members of the Confederacy. What that acquisition was will be exhibited in the sequel.

Again, sir, it is equally untrue in fact as false in philosophy, that the States of the South are exclusively the beneficiaries of the compacts of the Constitution. Examine those compromises as they are enumerated by the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

First, is the partial representation of our slave population. Evidently here is a concession of right and a deduction of power on the part of the South. The States of the South, before entering the Confederacy, had a right to insist that their weight in the popular branch of the Federal Congress should be proportioned to their entire negro population; instead of which, they agreed to subtract *two fifths* from this basis of representation. Here was a clear and important concession from the South, at the instance and for the advantage of the North. If they had demanded the enumeration of all their slaves in the ratio of representation, as they had a right to do, their strength on this floor to-day would be increased by the addition of sixteen members, and we would not be embarrassed now by the possibility of a Black Republican Speaker.

So, sir, with the slave trade, which the South had a right to perpetuate, but to the suppression of which, after a given period, she consented, in the interest of the Confederacy. This, too, was a signal concession by the South.

The gentleman adduces, and properly, too, the

constitutional stipulation for the rendition of fugitive slaves as an advantage which the South gains in the Confederacy. It is true, sir, if the southern States maintained their original independence, they would have no right to reclaim their slaves from the jurisdiction of foreign Powers. But, sir, apart from the nullity of this provision, consider by what a concession the South purchased the poor equivalent. By resigning the privilege of levying tonnage and impost duties, and transferring to the Federal Government all control over the foreign and inter-State commerce of the Confederacy, they placed their trade at the mercy of antagonist interests in the North; and most effectually have the North availed themselves of the power for the aggrandizement of their manufacturing and commercial interests, at the expense of the producing interests of the South. They have plucked us with merciless and insatiable exactions.

Thus, sir, it appears that in all the instances enumerated by the honorable member from Pennsylvania, the South, in effect, has lost rather than gained by the compromises of the Constitution.

I come, now, to the other proposition of the gentleman's argument; to the burden of his indictment; to the point of his invective against the South; to the declaration that the South has been faithless to "all compacts, compromises, and covenants." Among the compromises of the Constitution, which one has the South violated? The honorable gentleman did not allege that we had broken any except the engagement for the suppression of the slave trade. Is this a just accusation? I confidently affirm it is not. Exceptional instances of lawlessness do not impugn the character of a community. As a body, the people of the South are in no way concerned in the violation of the law against the slave trade. They are not more guilty of the crime than the people of the North. In fact, and notoriously, it is in northern ships, by northern men, and for the aggrandizement of northern capital, that the slave trade is prosecuted in defiance of legal prohibition. These assertions I defy the gentleman to contradict.

Well, sir, how stands the South in respect of that other class of compromises—I mean the compromises of legislation? Here let me protest that I have no reverence for this sort of compromise. I cannot comprehend the meaning of a legislative compact. It is an idea that eludes analysis. No one enactment of the Federal Legislature has more sanctity and stability than another. All laws rest upon their approved policy; and they are liable to repeal the moment their operation

becomes mischievous. It is a usurpation of power, and an act of folly, for one Congress to undertake to protect its legislation from amendment by a succeeding Congress.

Still, I will follow the gentleman, step by step, in his indictment. I will take up specification after specification, and exhibit, beyond question, that the South is innocent of any infraction even of these legislative compromises. More than that; I will retaliate the charge. I will make the North plead to an indictment, and will prove that it is the anti-slavery party which has violated "all compacts, compromises, and covenants."

The honorable member accuses the South of an infraction of the Missouri compromise. The facts show that the South adhered to it, but the North repudiated it. He declared, explicitly and emphatically, that the South had infringed and violated the Missouri compromise. Sir, I hurl back the accusation, and tell him that it was not the South, but the North, the North entirely and exclusively, with his aid and his approbation, that violated this legislative compromise of 1820.

Mr. HICKMAN. I do not wish to interrupt the gentleman further than to correct a slight mistake into which he has fallen. He supposes that the repeal of the Missouri compromise was passed with my sanction and consent.

Mr. PRYOR. Not at all. I will come to that point. If the honorable gentleman will let me develop my idea, he will find that I am not far out after all.

Mr. HICKMAN. I beg the gentleman's pardon. I will say this, in order to put that matter at rest: I was opposed to the repeal of the Missouri line, and to the legislation of 1854. I have stated upon this floor, on more than one occasion, that if I had been a member of this body at the time of the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska act, I would have voted against it, as I foresaw that it would be pregnant of mischief.

Mr. PRYOR. I say, sir, notwithstanding, that it was the gentleman's constituents, that it was the anti-slavery party of the North, the party outside of the Democracy, who violated this compromise of 1820, which is now so sacred in the contemplation of the honorable member and his associates. How did they violate it? Why, sir, the South, with that *punic* faith which is characteristic of them, insisted, after the compromise of 1820 was enacted, that it should be extended and perpetuated. We so insisted in the case of Oregon, in the case of the organization of governments for the Territory acquired from Mexico, and in the case of the adjustment of the disputed boundary between Texas and New Mexico—three

instances wherein the South, with the loyalty and chivalric regard for honor, which, if not peculiar to her, is certainly characteristic of her, did propose to insist upon the prolongation and perpetuation of the Missouri line of 36° 30'. What did the North, this very party now clamorous for the Missouri compromise? They, upon those three several occasions, did infract it, did violate it, did refuse to perpetuate it. Afterward, the South, finding that these gentlemen of irreproachable and immaculate honor employed that compromise merely for their own aggrandizement and our oppression, finding that when it was to their advantage they adhered to it, and when to their disadvantage they nullified it; the South, I say, finding these things, and considering, meanwhile, that the compromise was unconstitutional—unconstitutional in that it proposed an arbitrary exclusion against the States of the South—then declared that inasmuch as the North will not keep their faith, as they will not observe the compact, the Government should revert to the principles of the Constitution.

With a singular and unaccountable inaptitude, the honorable gentleman adduces the tariff compromise of 1832 as another instance of bad faith on the part of the South. This statement, sir, is the exact reverse of historical truth. The compromise of 1832, with a view to appeasing the discontent of the South under an intolerable burden of iniquitous taxation—a discontent particularly developed in the gallant Palmetto State—stipulated that the duties should undergo a gradual reduction until they reached a revenue level, where they should remain. Nevertheless, this process of amelioration was arrested, and, instead, a most grievous and outrageous weight of taxation imposed upon the South at the very moment when she was promised relief from the oppression—imposed in the enactment of the bill of abominations by the very North which now complains of bad faith—imposed for the advantage of the very Pennsylvania which the gentleman partially represents. This is another instance of southern perfidy!

I am conscious of treading on delicate ground in reverting to the compromise of 1850; but here, too, I affirm, the gentleman urges an unjust accusation. The truth is, that, objectionable in many features as that measure was to the South, the South yet adhered to its principle, and proposed to incorporate it in the Kansas-Nebraska bill of 1854. This suggestion the North resisted; but the South was firm, and, aided by a number of faithful northern Democrats, succeeded in securing an explicit recognition and reaffirmation of the principle and



policy of the compromise of 1850. This is another example of southern perfidy!

I come now to the Kansas compromise of 1854, as the honorable gentleman describes it, a reference which I feel to be delicate and embarrassing. In respect of this measure I give my opinion that neither the northern or southern Democracy are guilty of an intentional violation of engagement.

The truth is, that the Kansas-Nebraska bill was susceptible of a various reading. Obvious enough on its face, like a palimpsest, it contained matter of grave import beneath the surface. We of the South said the principle of the bill was, that the people of a Territory might determine the question of slavery in the exercise of State sovereignty, and in the act of organizing a State government. Others maintain that the principle of the bill recognized the right of the people, by an act of territorial legislation, to determine the question of slavery. It is a palpable, important, and, I apprehend, irreparable, difference of construction. However, since, for our interpretation, we have the authority of the highest judicial tribunal, there is reason to hope it may eventually prevail. But, be that as it may, I protest against the assumption that an opinion on territorial power shall be made a test of political fidelity. I can understand how the enemies of the Democracy may employ and aggravate the issue as a wedge to rend asunder the unity of our party; but I cannot comprehend how any Democrat can assist in the suicidal operation. In all political organizations there must be some *open* questions. It is impossible to enforce an exact conformity of opinion upon every subject of speculation. The policy of the Democratic party has been to tolerate a difference of opinion in this matter of territorial power.

The appointment of General Cass, the recognized author of the squatter-sovereignty dogma, to the chief place in the present Democratic Administration, provoked no complaint or remonstrance from the Democracy of the South. I am for adhering to this judicious policy—this “salutary neglect.” I persist in my own opinion; I will battle for its recognition by the Government; but I will not be so much the bigot as to sacrifice my friends, my party, and my country, to the idol of my peculiar speculations. In the story of the last siege and capitulation of Constantinople, there are many mortifying illustrations of human depravity; but no circumstance of that frightful episode so shocks the sensibilities and abases our pride as the pertinacious altercations of the degenerate Greeks, over frivolous issues, in the very agony of the struggle, and while the barbarian hosts were thundering at the gates of the city. It

was the infatuation of a race smitten with the vengeance of Heaven. But one national party interposes between the Capitol and the triumph of sectional encroachment; and shall the Democracy, in presence of the enemy, and with such mighty issues in suspense, paralyze their strength by furious contests over inferior and irrelevant issues? If they do, then will expire the last hope of the Union.

No, sir; however I differ from the Democracy of the North on this or that dogma, I have for them no word of taunt or reproach; but many words of tolerance and fraternal friendship, rather. When I recount their past exploits; when I recall the many signal instances of their valor and devotion; when I see them bravely bear up against the pressure of adverse influences, and emerge unscathed from the fiery furnace of fanatical persecution, or fall heroically, a Spartan band in the Thermopylæ of the Union, swept down by the assaults of resistless numbers; when I witness their fidelity on this floor, and in this struggle; when, in my own feeble endeavors to uphold the rights of the South and the supremacy of the Constitution, I feel the support of their generous arms, and am cheered by the sound of their fraternal voice; when I recall and observe these things, and still hear the Democracy of the North reproached by Representatives from the South, I am impelled to exclaim, with the indignant Roman:

“Be gone:

Run to your houses; fall upon your knees;

Pray to the gods to intermit the plague.

That needs must fall on this ingratitude.”

So, Mr. Clerk, the South is acquitted, triumphantly acquitted, of the grievous charge preferred by the member from Pennsylvania. She has not violated her engagements. She has been loyal to her word. She has redeemed to the full every obligation she assumed by adhesion to the Confederacy.

But, sir, how stands the North in this respect? Have the party in whose name the gentleman speaks, exhibited that scrupulous good faith implied in his pretension to arraign other people? I say they have not. I repeat his own words, with a retaliatory application, and charge the dominant party in the North with a persistent violation of all faith, “all compacts, compromises, and covenants.” This is no light accusation, uttered from an impulse of splenetic humor. It is a grave indictment, for the proof of which I have the unimpeachable testimony of history. We have already seen that it was the North which violated the legislative compromises of 1820, 1832, and 1850. So, but in a still more conspicuous

manner, has the North repudiated and trampled upon the sacred compromises of the Constitution.

It was an implied compromise of the Constitution that the South should be guaranteed the rights which she enjoyed at the time of joining the Confederacy. Nevertheless we have seen the North availing itself of its superior numbers to extort from the South a surrender of the slave trade in the District of Columbia.

It was an implied compact of the Constitution that the people of the South should possess the peace and privilege of fellow-citizenship with their confederates in the Union; nevertheless, they are harassed by every species of obloquy and persecution from those who had engaged to accord them every sympathy and succor.

It was an implied compact of the Constitution—the compact indeed which is the vital principle of the Constitution—that the States of the South should enjoy equal rights and an equal dignity in the Confederacy; nevertheless, the majority party in the North and on this floor proclaim their purpose to deny the South any participation in the common domain, and to degrade it to the condition of a provincial dependency.

It is an express, solemn stipulation of the constitutional compact, that fugitive slaves should be returned to their masters. How does the North redeem this obligation? For answer, I need only advert to the persistent attempts of the anti-slavery party to compel the repeal of the statute; to their open nullification of the law in *eleven* of the northern States; to their violent resistance of its execution; to the patent and significant fact that, in consequence of the nullity of the law for the rendition of fugitives from labor, slavery is practically abolished on the northern frontier of the southern States.

Above all, as avowed in the preamble to the Constitution, the Confederacy was formed to “establish justice and insure domestic tranquillity;” and yet we of the South are pillaged by compatriots, while fellow-citizens incite our slaves to insurrection! Thus it is, sir, that the North has made manifest its reverence for compacts; thus it is, sir, that the North has redeemed its pledges under the Constitution. Hereafter, let no northern Representative reproach the South with infidelity to engagements.

In fact, the entire history of this sectional struggle exhibits the South in a uniform attitude of defense; and exhibits the North pursuing an invariable policy of insult and encroachment. No man will dare deny this statement. The most adventurous and unscrupulous Representative on the other side, will not undertake to adduce a sin-

gle instance wherein the South has impaired the interests, or trampled on the rights of the non-slaveholding States. Indeed, the honorable member from Pennsylvania [Mr. HICKMAN] admits the fact, by the declaration that if freed from the Confederacy the North would not again subscribe the Constitution.

Mr. HICKMAN. The gentleman is mistaken in this. I said that the present temper and feeling which prevailed both at the North and the South at this time, would prevent a compact from being entered into such as was entered into by our fathers.

Mr. PRYOR. I think that is substantially what I alleged, that the North would not adopt the Constitution to-day, if it were to be done over again.

Mr. HICKMAN. I said that both sides would reject it.

Mr. PRYOR. Certainly, both sides; but for different reasons. The North, because it feels the compact of confederacy as a restraint on its aggressive purposes; while the South occupies a position of passive protest against attack. Sir, I may tell the gentleman that if the thing were to be done again, the South, too, would refuse to accept the Constitution, not because of dissatisfaction with its principles and provisions, but for the reason that no faith is to be reposed in her northern confederates. To this sad conviction we are driven by long years of endurance under an increasing burden of obloquy and aggression.

Mr. Clerk, in another particular the honorable member from Pennsylvania was conspicuously frank and explicit in avowing the principles and purposes of the dominant party in the North. I allude to his proclamation of the “irrepressible conflict.” When we consider that the honorable member does not belong to the Black Republican party; that he recoils from the *ne plus ultra* of their sectional schemes; that he professes to be a moderate man, conservative of the Constitution and the Union—I say, when we consider these things, and yet hear him declare the doctrine of the “irrepressible conflict,” we may readily understand to what extremes of agitation and encroachment the avowed advocates of anti-slavery propose to push their policy. If this is the “tender mercy” of the member from Pennsylvania, how great must be the cruelty of the Republican nominee for Speaker.

Mr. Clerk, this theory of the “irrepressible conflict” is a very simple proposition, easily susceptible of analysis and intelligible exposition. As propounded by its author, Mr. SEWARD, it means that an original, inherent, and irreparable



antagonism exists between the two sections of the Confederacy; that negro slavery is repugnant to the principles of civil liberty; that it is an obstruction to the success of republican government; that the Union, like the womb of Rebecca, is torn by two associate but irreconcilable elements—is rent by the struggles of Ormuzd and Ahriman, the beneficent spirit of good, and the malignant spirit of evil; that this controversy is inevitable and incurable, and must go on with increasing fury until one or the other principle be vanquished and exterminated. From the vantage ground of this deduction, Mr. SEWARD infers an imperative obligation on the people of the North to make war upon slavery—the evil spirit which saps the strength and mars the fair proportions of the Republic; to make the war and to prosecute the war until slavery be swept from the soil of the South. This is the evangel of the “irrepressible conflict” as proclaimed by its great apostle.

Mr. McKNIGHT. Do I understand the gentleman to say that WILLIAM H. SEWARD is the author and originator of the irrepressible conflict doctrine?

Mr. PRYOR. I will come to that directly.

Sir, I am not unmindful of the apology for Senator SEWARD, offered some time ago by the eloquent member from Ohio, [Mr. CORWIN.] It was obviously an attempt to prepare the popular mind of the country, and of the South especially, for submission to the Presidency of WILLIAM H. SEWARD; and, as such, demands a passing criticism. Sir, candor requires of me to say that the honorable member’s apology was more ingenious than satisfactory. What was it? Simply this: that whatever Mr. SEWARD’s present principles, they are mere “speculative opinions”—I quote the words—which he will not carry into the administration of the Government; that despite his ultraism now, he will be a conservative President. If this apology be good for anything, it acquits Mr. SEWARD of the charge of political heresy by convicting him of the basest personal villainy. It is equivalent to saying that Mr. SEWARD is playing a part of criminal hypocrisy; that he is inflaming the anti-slavery agitation from no motive of philanthropy, but for a political purpose only; that all the earnestness and intensity of purpose which he now affects, is merely the mask of an unscrupulous demagogue; that when he mounts to the summit of his ambition, he will kick away the ladder which assisted his elevation; and, like Henry IV., of France, repudiate in power the faith he professed in opposition. If the friends of Mr. SEWARD are content with this apology, they make small account of personal integrity.

For good and sufficient reasons I cannot accept it as satisfactory, or as giving assurance that the South should not resist the Presidency of WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

The sincerity of SEWARD in his sectional principles has been put to the test of actual experiment. When Governor of New York, and so sworn to support the Federal Constitution, he refused, on the demand of Virginia, to execute the fugitive slave law. But, if he had the disposition, he would want the power to administer the Government in the spirit of the Constitution. I do not say in accordance with its forms; for history proves, by many signal examples, from Augustus Cæsar, who employed a servile senate to consolidate his despotism, to Baltimore, where the ceremonies of popular election are perverted to the suppression of the liberties of the people—all history proves how easily the forms of civil liberty may be reconciled with the substance of practical oppression. This I do affirm, that if WILLIAM H. SEWARD should be elected to the Presidency, he will be altogether unable to resist the pressure of fanatical influence impelling him to war upon the rights and institutions of the South. He will discover that he has evoked a spirit which he cannot allay; that he has roused a storm which he cannot control; that he has kindled a conflagration which he cannot extinguish; that, like the unhappy Frankenstein, his diabolical arts and incantations have called into being a monster who mocks his authority and defies his power.

The member from Ohio deduced a pleasing augury of SEWARD’s Presidency from the recollection of Fillmore’s administration; but, conceding the sincerity of Mr. Fillmore’s recantation of Abolitionism, I discern another and adequate explanation of his conservative course in office. Sir, he was impotent for evil. If his purposes were sectional, he could not carry them into execution. He had no alternative but to act the patriot President, since he was under the supervision and control of a Democratic Congress. The case will be altogether different with SEWARD. If he comes into office, he will come upon the crest of an insurgent popular fanaticism, which will brook no resistance to its will or denial of its demands. In vain did Xerxes attempt to fether the billows of the stormy Dardanelles; in vain did Canute forbid the tide to encroach upon his royal presence. Just as impotent would be the attempt of SEWARD to still the rage of the anti-slavery fanaticism and to chastise its fury into a decent subordination to the restraints of the Constitution. If he essay a retrograde step, he will realize the fate of Mirabeau. If he fail even to keep pace with the move-



ment of his party, he will experience the doom of Danton. He will be confronted with no opposition in this Capitol; but a Senate of janissaries and a Prætorian band of Representatives will at once dictate his policy and act the obedient instruments of his will. He will redeem his threat to "reorganize the judiciary;" and then no solitary barrier will stand between him and absolute empire.

This may all be true, exclaims the honorable member from Pennsylvania, and yet the southern States shall not take refuge in disunion from the yoke of oppression.

Mr. HICKMAN. I wish now, sir, once for all, to put myself right. I shall take the opportunity, at no distant day, to treat that matter with some particularity; but I wish now merely to say, that I do not maintain what I am told is the doctrine of WILLIAM H. SEWARD, that one section of this Union is to extinguish the other. I mean to assert, sir, just exactly what I have heretofore declared, that the North are resolute and fixed in their purpose *not* to allow a dissolution of this Union. I do not care what the antagonism may be between the sections, the Union must and shall be preserved.

Mr. PRYOR. The gentleman tells us, that if we attempt it, we will be coerced into submission—a purpose for which eighteen million, as against eight million people, is abundantly adequate. I remember how the extravagance of this boast surprised the conscious heroism of Black Republican Representatives into an involuntary outburst of self-applause! Sir, I will not retort by defiance; I will not retaliate the menace. It would be undignified; it would be indecent. For answer, I have only to give the gentleman assurance that the southern States do not now intend to abandon the Union, whatever ultimate recourse events may impose upon them. It is the last resource of oppressed and humiliated nationalities, like the Israelites of old, to gather up their household gods and wander in quest of some new home and some happier destiny. The people of the South are of a different spirit, and of another purpose. They are resolved, in the first instance, to vindicate their rights *in the Union*, peaceably if possible, by force if necessary. The Constitution and the Confederacy are the work of their fathers' hands; and they do not mean to give up the inheritance, with all its glorious traditions and inspiring memories. They do not intend to lose the *prestige* of legitimacy; to throw away the power of the Federal Government; to act as if they were not the regular and orderly interest in the Confederacy. On the contrary, they will vindicate the principles of the Con-

stitution and the integrity of the Union against the sectional and treasonable schemes of the anti-slavery party. They will scourge and expel the evil spirits which infest the holy temple; and in this sacred service they expect the assistance of millions of true and valiant men in the North. The proportion will be reversed; and, instead of his *eighteen million*, the honorable member and his party, reduced to an insignificant band of traitors, will be crushed between the conjoint efforts of patriots in the South and patriots in the North.

Abominable, Mr. Clerk, as this doctrine of the "irrepressible conflict" is in its principle and consequences, an honorable member from Illinois [Mr. FARNSWORTH] imputes its authorship to a southern writer—the individual who now addresses you. The leader of the Black Republican party is singularly unfortunate in his apologists. By one, he is impeached of perfidy; by another, of a flagrant plagiarism. Again I come to his rescue, and restore his credit for originality, by adverting to the fact that he promulgated the theory of the "irrepressible conflict" as early as 1848—eight years in advance of the article in the *Richmond Enquirer*.

Mr. McKNIGHT. Does the gentleman remember that, in 1849, a manifesto was issued to the country, drawn up and prepared by John C. Calhoun, of South Carolina.

Mr. PRYOR. I do.

Mr. McKNIGHT. And signed by all the members of the Virginia delegation in both Houses of Congress, in which this very doctrine of "irrepressible conflict" was promulgated?

Mr. PRYOR. That I deny.

Mr. McKNIGHT. Permit me to read two sentences only?

Mr. PRYOR. I should have no objection to the gentleman reading the whole address, for it is a very good one; but I cannot yield for that purpose now.

Mr. McKNIGHT. I will consume only a moment. I will read only one or two sentences. I quote that manifesto from the second volume of Thomas H. Benton's *Thirty Years in the United States Senate*, page 734:

"We, whose names are hereto annexed, address you in discharge of what we believe to be a solemn duty on the most important subject ever presented for your consideration. We allude to the *conflict* between the two great sections of the Union, growing out of a difference of feeling and opinion in reference to the relations existing between the two races, the European and African, which inhabit the southern section, and the acts of aggression and encroachment to which it has led. The conflict commenced not long after the acknowledgment of our independence, and has gradually increased until it has arrayed the great body of the North against the South on this most vital subject. In

the progress of this conflict, aggression has followed aggression and encroachment encroachment, until they have reached a point when a regard for peace and safety will not permit us to remain longer silent."

My object in reading this is to show that to Mr. SEWARD has been given honor more than is due. The following are the names signed to that manifesto:

"Messrs. Atchison, of Missouri; Hunter and Mason, of Virginia; Calhoun and Butler, of South Carolina; Downs, of Louisiana; Foote and Jefferson Davis, of Mississippi; Fitzpatrick, of Alabama; Borland and Sebastian, of Arkansas; Westcott and Yulee, of Florida; Atkinson, Bayley, Bedinger, Bocock, Beale, W. G. Brown, Meade, R. A. Thompson, of Virginia; Daniel, Venable, of North Carolina; Burt, Holmes, Rhett, Simpson, Woodward, of South Carolina; Wallace, Iverson, Lumpkin, of Georgia; Bowdon, Gayle, Harris, of Alabama; La Sere, Morse, of Louisiana; R. W. Johnson, of Arkansas; and Stanton, of Kentucky."

I do not know that the Mr. Bocock who signed that manifesto is the same Mr. Bocock now in this House.

Mr. PRYOR and several others. Exactly the same.

Mr. McKNIGHT. Then, can it be possible that gentlemen who support a resolution denouncing Mr. SHERMAN for signing a particular document, and for favoring this irrepressible-conflict doctrine, can vote for a gentleman who has signed, indorsed, and promulgated the very same doctrine? [Great disorder and deafening cries of "Order!" from the Democratic benches.]

Mr. PRYOR. I cannot allow the gentleman, under a false, hypocritical pretense, to inject a flagitious speech into mine.

Mr. McKNIGHT. I understood the gentleman to yield me the floor.

Mr. PRYOR. For a special purpose, I yielded it, but you have violated that purpose. It is another violation of engagements and covenants by northern Representatives.

The gentleman is mistaken. In imputing the authorship of the "irrepressible conflict" to WILLIAM H. SEWARD, I did nothing more than observe the old maxim, in giving the devil his due. In the sense in which he propounded it, he was the first to promulgate it.

But, sir, it is untrue, in every sense untrue, that any man in the South ever adopted SEWARD's idea of the "irrepressible conflict." On the contrary, we deny that the subordination of negro slavery is repugnant to the principles of civil liberty, contending, rather, that it constitutes the most solid and staple basis of free government, and is instrumental in the highest development of civilization. We deny that slavery is repugnant to the Constitution, since, in fact, the most essential principle of the Constitution—the principle of rep-

resentation—reposes upon a recognition of slavery, and its most guarded guarantees are for the protection of slavery. We deny that slavery opposes any impediment to the progress of the Republic, forasmuch as in conjunction with slavery, and mainly by the aid of slavery, the Republic has already realized the most brilliant promise of national glory. We deny that any antagonism subsists between the social systems of the opposite sections. We deny that the rights of the South are incompatible with the interests of the North. In fact, the resources of one section are exactly responsive to the deficiencies of the other. Our economy of labor, disciplined and steady and unfailing, is an indispensable auxiliary to the adventurous and educated industry of the North. We plant and produce; they fetch and fabricate. We supply the solid basis; they the decoration of the Corinthian capital. The ever active and turbulent spirit of free labor in the North would precipitate the social system into anarchy, if it were not counteracted and controlled by the conservative interests of slave labor in the South.

This is my opinion of the harmonious relations logically existing between the two sections of the Confederacy.

Nevertheless, sir, I say there is an "irrepressible conflict;" but it is an "irrepressible conflict" between the provisions of the Constitution, the rights of the South, and the interests of the Union, on the one hand; and on the other the ideas and aims, the principles and purposes of the Black Republican party. When we contemplate the rapid and uninterrupted aggrandizement of this party, rushing like the Protondis in ebbless flow, and, in its resistless course, sweeping away every barrier of right, reason, and constitutional restraint; when we see it satisfied by no concession, and propitiated by no adjustment, all the little "compromises" of cobbling politicians, instead of arresting the inundation, only serving to fret the fanaticism of anti-slavery into a stronger and more turbulent stream; when we find that the audacity of its pretensions rises with the development of its power; when, after demolishing the outposts of slavery, it avows its purpose to repel the South from the common domain of the Confederacy, and to employ the agency of the Federal Government for the extermination of slavery in its stronghold; in the face of these facts—facts of portentous significance—we are forced to the conclusion that, between the South and the dominant party of the North, there does indeed rage an inevitable and "irrepressible" conflict. Optimists may be deceived, by the eddies along the bank, into the idea that the stream is running backward; but who-

ever looks out upon the true current and volume of waters will admit that the course of anti-slavery is ever and increasingly onward. Action and reaction, flux and reflux, is the law of progress. As we stand upon the beach contemplating the mighty movements of ocean, we observe a regular repetition of reflux waves; but, for all that, our little landmarks will be soon swept away by the aspiring sea. So with the usurpations of this anti-slavery party; except we get beyond their reach, they will speedily overwhelm all our rights.

Sir, believe me, the South understands the crisis as I represent it, and is bracing her energies for the inevitable struggle. If you will not take my word, be admonished by more authentic and authoritative manifestations. Listen to the voice of the people in primary meeting; hear the recommendations of our State Executives; recount the enactments of our State Legislatures—all animated with the single spirit of RESISTANCE, and all contemplating the single object of PREPARATION—be instructed, I beseech you, by the significance of these ominous developments, and retrace your march of encroachment before the irrevocable die is cast.

If this avail not for the salutary lesson, recollect the effect of the explosion at Harper's Ferry; remember with what alacrity the people of Virginia answered to the call of patriotism; with how quick an impulse of sympathy the shock of collision on our northern frontier vibrated throughout the limits of the Commonwealth, awakening a universal response of resentment and indignation; with what ardor and unanimity her gallant sons precipitated themselves in military array on the point of expected attack, ready and resolute to vindicate the honor of the South from the threat of insult or the shadow of aggression.

In conclusion, I would address a single word to the Representatives of the southern Opposition; it is a word of amicable expostulation and fraternal entreaty. Among our constituency there is no difference of sentiment, no division of party. Why, then, may we not import hither, and represent here, some image and accent of the divine harmony which prevails in the bosom of the people? Under the pressure of this supreme necessity let us close up the trivial differences of party, and collect our energies for their most effective exertion; so that, whatever be the issue, we may accept it as well with the repose of conscious strength as with the dignity of conscious right. Unity is the solitary need of the South. With that, panoplied in the triple armor of a just cause, she may await the signal from the adversary without a momentary misgiving of the result. Speaking on the suggestion of the gentleman from Pennsylvania, I affirm, that eight million freemen, educated to the use of arms, animated with the invincible valor of a high-souled sensibility, and united by the ties of fraternal sympathy in the defense of everything dear to the spirit of honor, cannot be subjugated by any combination whatever, least of all by a miscellaneous mob of crazy fanatics and conscience-stricken traitors. And, with the resources of strength which abound in the limits of the southern States, an imperial domain, every diversity of climate, and every variety of production—especially a monopoly of the staples which rule the commerce of the world—with these incomparable advantages, it is possible, if need be, to organize a confederacy out of our own resources, and to rear a fabric of government which shall survive the lapse of ages, and renew with brighter illustration the republican glories of antiquity.



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